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Testimony of Barbara J. Collins  
Human Rights and Responsibility Section

**In SUPPORT of  
H.J. No. 2, RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE  
CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW FOR NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING**

Government Administration and Elections Committee  
FRIDAY, MARCH 2, 2012

Thank you for allowing me to speak today regarding bill LCO No. 1420. I am Barbara J. Collins, Chair of the Human Rights and Responsibility Section of the Connecticut Bar Association (CBA), and former President of the CBA.

I am here to speak in support of the proposed amendment to the Connecticut constitution to eliminate the language which returns to the General Assembly the power to determine the standards for obtaining an absentee ballot by eliminating the language in the Constitution that spells out the only reasons an absentee ballot is allowed.

The Constitution states at present:

The general assembly may provide by law for voting in the choice of any officer to be elected or upon any question to be voted on at an election by qualified voters of the state [who are unable to appear at the polling place on the day of election because of absence from the city or town of which they are inhabitants or because of sickness or physical disability or because the tenets of their religion forbid secular activity] who do not appear in person at a polling place on the day of an election.

This language was adopted around 1965 and while it is clear that it was intended to limit a citizen's ability to vote by absentee ballot it is unclear why it was felt it was needed. The language in question *[bracketed above]* needs to be moved from the Constitution to the General Statutes so that the General Assembly can modify the provisions as the need and practices of the electorate change. The Human Rights Section is concerned and supports this bill because it fears that as more citizens, particularly lawyers, stop working the traditional 9 to 5 work schedule, more citizens will be not be able to participate in the voting process and the dismal numbers of percentage of citizens who vote will shrink even more. The ability to vote is a fundamental right of US citizens and the General Assembly should pass this bill in order to be able to quickly respond to changes in voting processes and habits so that more citizens are encouraged to vote.